

EXCITEMENT CITY UNLIMITED

#8

April 5th, 1988

Circulation 85

Bye Bye, Ev

I won't bore you with a long, tedious account of how hectic the last few weeks have been. Despite a cold, nursing Barbara's flu, a project to be handed in next week, a job with too much overtime (but it pays the printing), somehow ECU stumbles out on time again. Pity it's such a duff issue...

Misha Mazda is now fixed. Barbara now has the problem of juggling separate keys, one for the front door driver's side, and one for the rest of the locks. To prevent Misha being damaged in future, Barbara now takes care to park behind more expensive cars, in the hope that the vandals will pass by little Misha and break into the rich bastards' BMW or Audi instead.

I had to hold over a couple of interesting letters this issue, in particular a long one from mark lew. Next issue my course will have ended and (hopefully) I'll have the time to produce a longer, more interesting issue. Again, no promises though.

It's that Runestone Poll time again. Next time you should find your very own ballot paper enclosed courtesy of Bruce Linsey's old firm's photocopier. As you may have heard, Barbara and I will be running this year's charity appeal. We've decided to fund Aids Research this time. Due to the sensitive nature of asking for money (and partly due to our deplorable laziness) we won't be attempting to convert those of you who have no wish to chip in and contribute. If you want to give money to help find a cure for Aids, we are here to assist that. If you feel moved to write an editorial disagreeing with the whole project we will ~~be very glad to notice~~ respect your feelings.

So what's your prediction for top zine in the Runestone Poll? Praxis, Praxis, or Praxis? In Britain we have a time honoured tradition of voting down the obvious front-runner but I can't see any real opposition to Alan Stewart. Although Conrad is a great guy, I can't see Costaguana completing a hat-trick. Even Conrad can't milk the sympathy vote for two years running. At the other end of the scale watch out for close contest between Robert Sacks and Bruce Geryk as Blunt Instruments sets an all-time record for dropping the most places in successive polls.

It's midnight. My tape has just ended and I am off to bed....

EXCITEMENT CITY UNLIMITED is published by Simon Billenness and Barbara Passoff who live at 630 Victory Blvd. Apt. 6F, Staten Island, NY 10301, USA. Home phone is (718) 981 6247. ECU costs you 75¢ if you live in North or South America. All others pay a rapidly depreciating \$1 to receive this airmail. Meat is Murder.

AROUND THE HOBBY

The hobby has suffered from a few serious folds this month. First off was Magus, which was highly regarded and, apparently, ran a lot of games well to regular deadlines. Since I didn't trade with this one, I can't say that the fold really bothered me.

More of a shame, from my point of view at least, is the cutting back of Costaguana. I must admit that Conrad is doing the right thing. After finally realising that the zine was taking up too much of his precious time, he's decided to gradually run down the games and eliminate most of the chat and to hell with his Runestone Poll placing. Nevertheless, I still expect a thin Costaguana to be larger than two ECUs...

Another zine undergoing a rollback is Over There. Hugh Christie recently circulated a letter of explanation which included the following reasons for the fold.

"I find it is impossible to publish the type of szine that I had in mind (what you saw in OVER THERE) and not subject ones self to eventual feuding. I refuse to publish under that circumstance. If I must publish letters which cause grief to others, become the blunt of criticism for not taking sides within a Hobby dispute, see my friend and former student Bob Smith ridiculed for taking pride in an accomplishment, and continuously have to explain to my club members that things they read about in other zines are not the Hobby as a whole; well, you get the idea."

To a certain extent I sympathise with Hugh. There has always been an amount of gratuitous, self-serving criticism within the hobby and the Bad Boys are just the latest, and most blatant, example of this. However, to simply give in and crawl into ones shell, seems drastic and defeatist. If you don't want to be part of hobby feuds and controversies, why not just ignore those topics and concentrate on more interesting and productive areas of the hobby?

On the other hand, in a recent editorial in Vertigo, Brad Wilson bemoans the lackluster nature of the hobby mainstream.

"There seems to be an attack of niceness, cuteness, Mister Rogersism, in the hobby these days. Everywhere you look, everyone's being so inoffensive. I don't mean inoffensive in regard to feuding; the less of that, the better. But press is censored, articles are nice, jokes nunnishly clean, letter columns almost inane ("What's your favorite color"), and cuteness rules. Yuck!"

Indeed. It's interesting to note that Brad, despite his desire to be more incisive, doesn't actually come out and say which zines promote this vile cult of "niceness, cuteness, Mister Rogersism". Perhaps the most notable example of this genre is Linda Courtemanche's subzine High Inertia. HI is a great example of a subzine produced well. It runs a couple of games reliably, it always comes out on time but the overall character of the thing is just a little too twee for my taste. ("Twee" is English for "overly cute" in case you were wondering. Since it doesn't appear in my copy of The American Heritage Dictionary, I thought I'd better define it for you.)

The heart of High Inertia is the letter column in which Linda throws out a couple of topics for discussion. Personally, I find this approach a little forced and more reminiscent of an encounter group discussion than the argumentative cut and thrust of a more traditional hobby letter column. There's a place for almost anything in the hobby and I would hate to see editors give up experimenting with different styles of zines. Despite Brad's view, I reckon Linda's approach to hobby chat is more of an exception, however, to be blunt, I'd hate to see it become the norm.

Since I've quoted from it at length, it seems as apt a time as any to give Vertigo a proper review. Brad Wilson puts a lot of himself into the zine and has the style and substance to do it right. I can't say I agree with him on any subject he covers in his latest issue, whether it be politics (Brad is another libertarian) or the Runestone Poll. However his music tastes are closer (and wider) than mine, and he's read Hunter S. Thompson so he can't be all bad. Brad is currently touting for Midwesterners, Westerners and Europeans to join his games. I'd certainly recommend Brits to check out this quintessentially American zine. For contrast, give a Rebel a try, so that you can sample for yourself its famous subzine, High Inertia.

Vertigo: Brad Wilson, PO Box 126, Wayne, PA 19087, USA

Rebel: Melinda Holley, PO Box 2793, Huntington, WV 25727, USA

A new zine for me has been the revived benzene from Mark Lew, 438 Vernon, #103, Oakland, CA 94610. This was previously a Diplomacy zine but now Mark has relaunched it as a personalzine, highlighting his comments on politics and life in general. This is a very difficult type of zine to do well on a regular basis and time will tell whether Mark is up to it. Francois Cuerrier in a recent Passchendaele describes BCU and Costaguana as good zines for coverage of American politics but benzene just blows us away with its depth and incisiveness. Again, Mark's politics are more of the libertarian variety and not entirely to my taste but he knows his subject matter and I respect that. On the other he can come a cropper when talking about a topic he's unfamiliar with (viz animal rights) and the result can be rather embarrassing. For an example of Mark's style, there should be a letter from him later this issue.

The latest benzene contains an unintentionally funny letter from Bruce Geryk. I've since given up trying to communicate with this pubescent bag of venom with a superiority complex and it's a testament to Mark's patience that he attempts to reason with him. Bruce berates Mark for not owning an Audi. As you may know, it was the Audi 5000 which featured on a recent 60 Minutes. Apparently, the car will drive smoothly for miles only to accelerate suddenly and without reason, often injuring innocent bystanders. Mr Jerk has obviously chosen a car which suits his temperament...

A couple of issues ago I plugged Cross Rifles as an up-and-coming zine. The latest issue (#4) is mostly games reports but it is neatly produced and Joe has written to me recently saying that he intends to put the zine on a stricter schedule while gradually increasing the non-game chat. It remains to be seen if Joe can put all his plans into progress but he seems a reliable sort so he has my vote of confidence. He's currently looking for Kingmaker players if anyone is interested.

Joe Santella, Old Route 6, Brewster, NY 10509, USA

Victoriana #7 is a must for anyone interested in exploring the Australian hobby. The issue contains reviews of every Aussie zine which effectively provides an overview of the entire Australian hobby. Their hobby is very small by British or American standards (they only have five zines in total) but, from what I've seen, it is extremely lively. I notice with envy that John manages to fill a Downfall waiting list in one month, which certainly shows up my own efforts! Since the International Subscription Exchange now extends to Australia, why not drop me a cheque for this one?

John Cain, 76 Bancol Road, Balwyn, 3103, Australia

It probably goes without saying that anyone interested to checking the North American hobby ought to send money for a copy of the Zine Register. Ken Peel (8708 First Avenue, #T2, Silver Spring, MD 20910, USA) has now put two jam-packed, highly competent issues. At only 75¢ a copy it is a true bargain.

((Brian Longstaff has kindly agreed to GM one more game of Railway Rivals for ECU. This one is a RR variant with a couple of rules changes listed below.))

GAME NAME: Plan 9 From Outer Space

SPECIAL RULES

- 1) BUILDS: There will be six sets of three die rolls in one build round. Payments to rivals will not be calculated per set, but will be deducted from, or added to, each player's final income after all six sets of builds have been made. There will be no builds during the race round.
- 2) RACES: There will be six sets of six races in one race round. Each player may only enter a maximum of four races in each set. If he or she only enters, for example, only two races in the first set, then they cannot enter six races in the second set - and so on.
- 3) DEADLINES: For round one, the deadline will be three weeks to prevent a lot of diploming as to whose track goes where. For round two, the deadline will be seven weeks to give plenty of time for diploming, as far as joint runs, etc, are concerned.
- 4) NMRS: Any player NMing will have their track built by the GM, and will be out of the game. The track can then be used free of charge by other players, as long as some of their own track (or that of their partner in joint runs) connects with it at some stage in the particular race in which they use it.

The track will be built by the GM before all the others, and connections to it by other players will cost nothing.
- 5) THE GAME: Due to the experimental nature of this version, I'm renaming this game "Railway Rushes", and I will not be forwarding the results as part of the world RR player ratings.
- 6) MAP: For this first experimental game, the map to be used will be map I (Ireland). Five players are needed.

Brian Longstaff

PLAYRAILWAYRUSHESPLAYRAILWAYRUSHESPLAYRAILWAYRUSHESPLAYRAILWAYRUSHESPLAYRAILWAYRUS

Railway Rivals fans may also be interested to learn that Conrad von Metzke has started a North American RR statistics zine. Ostensibly, it only exists to publish the results of the RR games Conrad is running, but it's obvious he can't resist typing a page or two of general information about the game as it's run in North America. Don't ask Conrad for a copy of the zine if you want to read some more of his writing because you'll surely be disappointed. Conrad is wisely limiting the zine to RR and RR only. Unless you specifically want four pages of RR adjudications and statistics, this zine is not for you.

The other old hobby fart now reduced to playing choo-choo games is Bruce Linsey. He publishes Trax which runs one game of postal Empire Builder from Mayfair Games and also contains statistics and general information about the game and its spin-off, British Rails. If you play the games, the zine is for you.

Conrad von Metzke, 4374 Donald Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117, USA
Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashuelot Street, Apt 3, Dalton, MA 01226

THE GAMES

INDEPENDENT DEADLINE GAMES

Artichoke Hearts: International Cline 9 Diplomacy, Miller# 1988Ucn1209

This game has moved smoothly on to Autumn 1901. I could do with a few more standbys just in case.

Spectreman: Railway Rivals, Map K. GM: Brian Longstaff. Round 2.

Plan 9 From Outer Space: Railway Rivals, Map N. GM: Brian Longstaff. Starting.

WILLIAM RUFUS DEVANE KING

SPRING 1909

Retreats: French a bre disbanded

Builds/Removals: Germany builds a kie, a mun, a ber. Russia no builds received
Persia builds a jor, f araec. Italy removes f gre

Austria Kevin Tighe

a con-bul

Barbary: Jake Walters

f mao-por, f bre holds, f nao-wao, a alg-tun, f wms s a alg-tun,

a lib s a alg-tun

France: Jeff Hoffman

a bur-mun

Germany: Mike Pustilnik

a ven s a tri, a vie s a tri, a tri s a gal-bud, a gal-bud, a boh-tyr,

a kie-ruh, a mun-bur, a ber-sil, a stp-mos, a lvn s a stp-mos, a war-ukr,

f bel-eng, f lon s f bel-eng, f bar-nwg, f b -den

Italy: Robert Acheson

a spa s a gas-mar, a gas-mar, f rom holds, a alb-tri, f adr s a alb-tri

Persia: John Crosby

a jor-egy, f araec-red (impossible move), a sah-alg, f ion-lib, f ant-wao,

a tun s a sah-alg, a ank-con, f smy s a ank-con, f cre-sms

Russia: Rudi Rudisill

NMR! f bla, a bud, a rum, a bul, a ser all stand unordered

Retreats: Persian a tun & Austrian a con disbanded

Press

Germany-GM: I did not forget to retreat last turn! It was all part of a clever ploy to fool the opposition into believing that I'm incompetent. It'll work, you'll see.

Berlin-Italy: Everybody's my friend!

GAMENOTES

Not surprisingly, both endgame proposals were defeated.

So much for standby, Rudi Rudisill... Will Bob Gossage (9201 S Central Park, Evergreen Park, IL 60642-1405) submit standby orders for Russia. Thanks. Perhaps I should have insisted that Conrad stay on!

DEADLINE: Saturday, May 7th 1988

WAITING LISTS

(the one and only incredible, shrinking waiting lists...)

Stab: Derwood Bowen, Glenn Petroski, Brad Wilson

Stab is an interesting hidden movement variant of Diplomacy. Only contested moves are reported. Players have to keep track of their own units and guess about the whereabouts of their opponents'. This is not a game for paranoids! No gamefee. Rules available on request. Four more wanted.

Downfall of the Lord of the Rings: Doug Brown, Cathy Ozog, Rod Walker

Downfall is a much playtested British variant based on the famous Tolkein trilogy. It is generally regarded as the best Tolkein variant. Get to play Rohan, Gondor, Saruman, Gandalf or even Mordor itself. No gamefee. Rules available on request. Five more wanted.

Railway Rivals: GM Brian Longstaff

Map T (Middle Earth): Mark Nelson 4 wanted

Railway Rushes: GM Brian Longstaff

Map I (Ireland): 5 wanted

International Diplomacy: GM Mark Nelson

John Cain (Australia), David Stone (Trinidad), Edward Ainsworth (UK),
Laurence Cronin (Grenada), Ron Cameron (USA)

This is a "seven nations" game, ie one in which every player comes from a different country. Are there any Canadians out there? Three wanted.

International Diplomacy: GM Bob Gossage

John Piggott

This is a free for all currently containing all the leftovers from the seven nations game. Six more wanted.

Standbys: Cline 9: Jake Walters, Tom Ramsey?

International Dip: Bill Young, Martin Kloosterman, Robert Acheson

All Purpose: Doug Brown, Mike Pustilnik

Standbys are still actively solicited. If you sign up as a standby, you receive one free issue straight away. If you submit standby orders which are used, you receive three further free issues. Nice, eh?

~~COMEONGUYSJOINCOMEONGUYSJOINCOMEONGUYSJOINCOMEONGUYSJOINCOMEONGUYSJOINCOMEONGUYS~~

■ Our debate about the relative boastfulness of American and British stationery elicits a rather remarkable sheet of business paper from a reader. It was sent to him by W Schmidt, a firm with its headquarters at Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, US. The letterhead proudly proclaims that the honorary president of the company is J Christ of Nazareth.

I know that British firms are sometimes criticised for putting members of the House of Lords on their boards, but nobody over here, to my knowledge, has recruited quite as ambitiously as that. Let's hand it to the Yanks.

PLAYLIST THIS ISSUE: {yeah, all the usual trash...}

R.E.M., Document, Lifes Rich Pageant, Fables of the Reconstruction; Big Audio Dynamite; Suzanne Vega, The Jesus & Mary Chain, Darklands; (Actually this album is pretty damn good if very downbeat), Bob Dylan, Desire; Talking Heads, Naked; The Smiths, Strangeways Here We Come.

Can any aging hippies out there recommend me a few other Bob Dylan albums. "Desire" is simply excellent.

LETTUCE

((With the growing interest in Railway Rivals in America, I thought you might want to read a letter I recently received from the game's inventor.))

David Watts I'm cutting down on postal gaming and am now down to about ten zines! Similarly I've reduced the number of games I'm running from about forty to around twenty. As you know, I gave up my zine, Rostherne Games Review, about a year ago. I suddenly reached the point where I couldn't face producing any more RGRs. I'd done nearly 10 years, so nobody could complain! I'm still running games in 6 other zines, though. I need the time (the pbm hobby, with the zine, was taking up a third of my time) to develop new games.

The good years in Germany are over; after selling over 350,000 copies in 3 years, the sales of "Dampfross" there have fallen off heavily - there were 150 new board games on the market there last year, all of them taking sales away from older games!

Games Workshop have a dismal record for selling their version of RR, especially in the USA, where they sold only 228 copies in 1987! So it looks like both the German edition and the GW version will be off the market in 1989 or 1990.

So I have to develop more games. I'm now producing semi-finished versions of several of my long-established games which were available before in very primitive prototype form; the first of these, SLICK, is the old Oil Distribution game, with ideas from the Big Steel game too. That should be out about April/May with the others at intervals of 2 or 3 months after that. They won't make money for me - I'll only be producing 350 copies of each - but the hope is that they'll attract the attention of games companies, so that I can licence them like RR. The Germans also did a version of Pirate Island and sold nearly 50,000 in 2 years, but it looks like that's also heading for the chop next year. Still, in UK I sold only 20 of my own version and I still have 1500 to get rid of...

Are you coming over for the World Dip Con in Birmingham in July? I'll be there, running tournaments in RR and Coach Express - a somewhat similar game, in which the routes available are already laid out. A quicker and apparently simpler game; but actually requiring more consideration of its smaller range of options, since it's either difficult or impossible to make up for a mistake in developing your network. I'll be producing it, in a format similar to my tubed RR, in the summer, with double-sided laminated maps. We've got an experimental map, being played postally in two zines, based on the Greyhound network in the USA.

Latest RR maps are India and China - I've sent you free review copies of the paper maps, sea-mail, which should be with you in a month or so. Next out will be France and Spain, with Sweden and the London & Western in the summer/autumn.

I was at the trade Toys & Hobby show in Earls Court last Tuesday. Must have been 40 to 50 new one-man inventors there, trying without success to interest the trade with their products. All nicely and expensively produced, some looked to be good games, but still too many were Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit inspired; and still many with "roll the dice, move that number, do what it says on the square" as their game mechanism; all luck and no player interaction at all; but at least a dozen were really good; and perhaps one or two of them will make the grade.

As I know, it's almost impossible for the one-man concern to get anywhere. I was selling RR for 6 years before my turnover was £1,000, and I never made a profit of over £600 until the success in Germany. Indeed, without the Germans, I'd still, after 15 years, not be showing any profit at all overall. Last year, 88% of my games income was D-Marks and even with the drop in royalties this year, it will still be 75-80% this year. Some of the DM are from Das Spiel, who have shops in Hamburg and Berlin and who buy over half of the separate RR maps that I sell.

I always knew that the big royalties from Schmidt wouldn't last forever, so I banked them and only spent the interest. So I won't starve after all!

((I was interested to read your salutary story of the problems of one-man game designers. I must admit I was surprised to learn how short the life of Railway Rivals was in the commercial games market. I suspect RR will retain a staunch and long-lived grassroots following. I can't see any other game challenge RR's spot as the second most played postal game behind Diplomacy.

If anyone is interested in writing to David about RR or his other games (hey he has 1480 copies of Pirate Island to sell...) his address is: "Rostherne", 102 Priory Road, Milford Haven, Dyfed SA73 2ED, Wales.))

Mike Hopcroft I just got a copy of Railway Rivals. I haven't played it yet but it looks like my sort of game. The rules are simple enough to be mastered almost instantly (although they said that about Dip and look what happens), and it looks like I could get some of the strategy down fairly soon. I have Conrad von Metzke's address. // I may have to drop him a line soon and ask about maps. // I paid \$17 for the FTF version, complete with six water-soluble felt tip pens, little plastic trains, and a two-sided, specially laminated map with A (London and Liverpool) on one side and B (Western US) on the other.

One thing I noticed right away about RR maps; scale is irrelevant. It doesn't matter whether a hex is a certain distance or not; a hex is simply a hex, and since all hexes are the same length on a particular map and one does not change maps during a game, it doesn't matter. It also doesn't matter which currency is in use; 1,000 doesn't mean \$1,000 or £1,000 or 1,000 gold pieces; it simply means enough money to pay for one clear hex of track. Thus the system works anywhere. So a Tolkein map is just as feasible as a map of Austria or of Central Scotland.

((One of the strengths of Railway Rivals is its versatility. It's very easy to play and there are so many maps to choose from. I'm sure David and Conrad would be happy to correspond with you. Conrad, in particular, would be interested in sending you his RR statszine, especially if you joined his RR standby list. Want me to sign you up for the Tolkein map in ECU? However, if you're too busy with studying and your other hobby commitments, I'll understand.))

Brian Longstaff I'm going to send copies of the 10th edition postal rules to all RR players in ECU, as Doug Brown's orders were conditional which is against the rules.

With the ECU games, and one game in RGR to GM, I'm now doing all I can comfortably handle. (This includes the maps N, T, and the variant for ECU.)



By the way, re: my letter printed in ECU by you. "It's a mistake I'm going to make again." Wrong!!! "It's a mistake I'm not going to make again." Bet it has some readers wondering...

Also, I wasn't being a little over-sensitive to Mike Hopcroft's letter. My comments are a matter of fact, and are merely made to make the point about letting hobbies rule your life. It's part of a recent change I've made in my life concerning being more open to both myself and others. No more hiding behind masks and keeping emotions to myself. Some people don't like it, but I'm happier in myself even if I'm a non-political, non-religious meat-eater and a Star Trek and A-Team fan...

((I've no problem with you being outspoken. People are too uptight these days so feel free to let off some steam. I could do without the meat-eating though...))

Ron Cameron I have been a Mazda owner for close to ten years. I had a '78 GLC which I drove right off the showroom floor. Legally. It gave me over 80,000 carefree miles until the timing chain broke and I had to replace the engine. I traded it in, in 1983 for a 1983 Mazda Rt-7. I've never owned a car that I've enjoyed more. It's actually mine now (and not the banks) since I paid the last payment last September. It now has 75,000 miles and, except the hefty periodic maintenance fees the dealer charges for service, it's been great. I fight Los Angeles traffic for close to two hours each day and it astounds me that people like Hopcroft don't have the desire, or need, to get behind the wheel. So I hope Misha is as good to you and Barbara as my Mazdas have been to me. Of course, outside abuse notwithstanding, you'll get a lot of fun miles out of her. Misha that is.

((Running a zine can be quite gratifying. One issue I mention that we've bought a new car, and over the following few weeks, scores of satisfied Mazda owners come out of the woodwork. Misha is a male name by the way...

If you have to "fight" Los Angeles traffic for two hours a day, I'm not surprised people don't want to follow your example! What sort of fun is that?))

John Piggott Your political analysis of editors shows mainly how meaningless the terms "right-wing" and "left-wing" have become. For the record, I oppose what has become known as "big" government - somewhat of a misnomer, since I find that in Britain at least local government is far more oppressive, wasteful and remote than central government - and the latter is bad enough. It follows from this that I resent, for example, the state spending money on people who don't want to work, although those who genuinely cannot find work are a different matter. (If I were Dictator, I'd abolish the dole in London, but keep it elsewhere...) But the neighbourhood Gauleiters who call themselves "councillors" worry me far more.



mark lew the people you cite as difficult to place on the political spectrum sound like typical "classical liberals" also known as "neo-libertarians" - you know, folks who belong to the cato institute and subscribe to reason. the one-dimensional political spectrum is tres passé. the trendy way to look at it is in two dimensions, with left-right going diagonally.

((Mark encloses a card he received from a grassroots libertarian group. Unfortunately, it wouldn't reproduce well and I'm too short on time to redraw it. Perhaps next issue.))

John Piggott It is quite clear that your political views are different from mine. But that is no reason why either of us should be turned off the other. I'll tell you what does turn me off. It's where you say, of Richard Sharp, "I can't bear his rabid right-wing politics". The fact that you disagree with his fairly sensible opinions, but have no arguments to refute him, is no reason to taint him with a loathsome and incurable disease. Should I now describe you as a leper?

((Come on, Piggott, stop being disingenuous. I don't mind reading zines from editors who have radically different political views from myself. Three of my current favourites, Praxis, Vertigo and benzene strongly feature conservative and/or libertarian views. It's just that I find that the editors concerned can write in an interesting and argumentative manner whereas Richard Sharp just comes across as overbearing and irritating. Maybe I just find North American conservatives more interesting than their counterparts in the Old Country. I find it surprising that you would complain about my comments after you refer to Brian Creese in print as "The Commie of Canbury Park" and his zine as "puerile tripe"....))

John Boardman The comments on the election make me even firmer in my 1972 decision to stop voting. The attempts to pass off a man with George McGovern's record as a "peace candidate" were just too much to keep the system credible. A system that has given us Johnson, Nixon twice, Carter, and Reagan twice - is this a basically good system that sometimes delivers us a clinker, or is it basically a bad system?

The 1988 election will be just like all our other recent elections. The Democrats will nominate a babbling incompetent, and the Republicans will nominate a criminal conspirator, and we'll see which one is least repellant to a steadily diminishing electorate.

Martin Luther King never ran for public office. Can you name a politician of the last 30 years that has had the impact that he did?

((No, I can't. I've been of the opinion for some time that the cutting edge of American politics is to found in non-partisan interest groups rather than in the partisan political arena itself. Also the Supreme Court has a history of politically momentous landmark decisions. In terms of political influence, none of the recent crop of Presidents can hold a candle to Martin Luther King, Ralph Nader, Norman Lear, the Warren Court and sadly also The Moral Majority and Richard Viguerie.

I can see your point and your choice not to vote is a perfectly valid one. However, I would be prepared to compromise and vote for the least objectionable candidate, drawing consolation from the fact that conservatives will be just as disappointed with President Bush as liberals would be with President Dukakis or Cuomo.



America is certainly one of the worst of the Western nations for voter turnout. Commentators estimate that only half of the eligible voters will bother this year. How many of the non-voters are frustrated radicals and how many are frustrated right-wingers do you think?))

mark lew in ecu#7, scott hanson refers to "gore's wife censorship of music."

i suspect that he's just chosen his words carelessly, but if he or any of your other readers can cite evidence of censorship, i'd like to see it. though i've often heard the accusation, i've yet to find any indication that the parents' music resource center (the group ms gore co-founded) has ever advocated any form of censorship. to the best of my knowledge, what the pmrc has done is generate a lot of publicity (most significantly in the hearings before the senate commerce committee) to draw attention to their concerns, and negotiate an agreement with the recordings industry association of america to put labels on some of their records. (the message on the label is four words long -- "explicit lyrics, parental advisory" -- and is on fewer than 5% of rock albums.) to get this not-very-earth-shaking concession from the riaa, the pmrc has engaged in a campaign of market pressure and obstructive measures within the existing rules of regulatory agencies (eg the fcc). publicity-making demonstrations and threats of boycott are staple techniques for liberal causes, and blocking industry plans by submitting petitions of complaint to the appropriate agency is a routine tactic in environmental activism. college students may not agree with the pmrc's cause, but they are hypocrites if they deny the pmrc its right to pursue that cause in the manner it has.

((Care to respond, Scott?

Demonstrations and civil disobedience in front of Planned Parenthood are regular tactics of the anti-abortion movement. Right-wing groups have boycotted oil companies who do business in Angola. Tactics, which have previously been the sole employ of liberal groups, have been successfully appropriated by grassroots conservative groups for several years now.))

John Piggott Over here, there seems to be more interest than usual in the American election. // In view of our interest in the international implications of the election, we in Britain are not particularly interested in the Democrats. Who pays any attention to Mondale these days? But Dukakis seems to be fancied for the Democratic nomination, and second place in the Big One. If, as I read in ECU, he is firm on "gay rights" - a facet which I have not seen reported over here - then that is an added bonus for him. There were never many votes to be gained from pandering homosexuals pleas for special treatment (live and let live, I say, but mere equality never seems to have much appeal for these special interest groups); but in 1988 there are many votes to be lost.

((From what I understand, there was an uproar in Massachusetts when a gay couple was found to be fostering a child. I don't know whether Dukakis had a role in the ensuing fracas or if he just stood by. Anyhow, gay couples are now prohibited from being foster parents and the child was taken away from the couple concerned. At the very least Dukakis is guilty of caving in to bigotry.))

Finally, what is Gloria Jacobs complaining about - nothing to do on December 24 or 25? She doesn't know when she is well off. Here in Britain the entire country stopped operating for four days over Christmas, and most of it was inactive for a full fortnight! I'm better off than most, with three children, but it still got pretty wearing after the first couple of days. Do you have carol singers coming to the door nad begging for money during the month before as well? Serves you right if you do. We still get an army of trick-or-treaters around October 31, a nasty habit imported from America in the past few years, in spite of newspaper reports about people giving apples containing pepper or razor-blades which regularly surface at the time. Having my garage door vandalised one year by some of these little brats I concede that the apple-givers have a point.

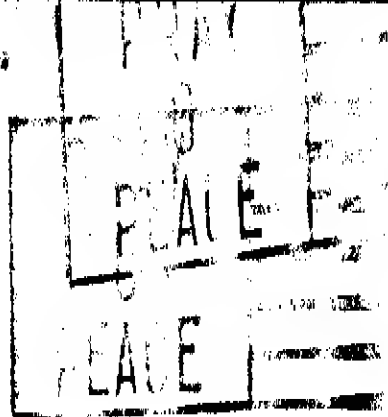
FROM

SIMON BILLENNESS & BARBARA PASSOFF

630 VICTORY BLVD. APT. 6F

STATEN ISLAND, NY 10301

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Domestic USA

YOUR CREDIT IS: TRADE

TIME TO COUGH UP:

Larry Peery

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WASHINGTON—Henry Kissinger, according to a dinner-party companion, offers this scenario for the 1988 election: The divided Democrats won't be able to agree on any nominee. The Republicans will select Vice President Bush, who will run unopposed—and lose.

DEADLINE: Saturday, May 7th, 1988